



Literacy Standards Review Team

Meeting Notes

Date: Wednesday, March 23, 2016

Time: 9:30 a.m. to 2:45 p.m.

Location: Iowa Department of Education, Des Moines, Iowa

MEMBERS PRESENT:

- Beth Baker-Brodersen, Des Moines Area Community College
- Sandra Beisker, Dubuque Community School District
- Sarah Brown Wessling, Johnston Community School District
- Lauren Burt, Meredith Corporation
- Bridget Castelluccio, Cedar Rapids Community School District
- Kara Dietrich, Ballard Community School District
- Carol Glackin, Morningside College
- Mendy Haefs, St. Patrick Elementary School, Sheldon
- Liz Hansen, Grinnell-Newburg Community School District
- Sally Huddle, Iowa Wesleyan University
- Kelsey Meyer, Grundy Center Community School District
- Kristine Milburn, West Des Moines Community School District
- Kathy Perret, Northwest Area Education Agency
- Jonathan Rogers, Iowa City Community School District
- Janelle Thompson, Heartland Area Education Agency
- Josh Wager, Des Moines Public Schools

Committee members who were absent: Salli Forbes from the University of Northern Iowa; Dixie Forcht from South Tama Community School District; Laura Johnson from Grant Wood Area Education Agency; Heather Lundquist from Atlantic Community School District; Erin Miller from Ames Community School District; Deborah Reed from Iowa Reading Research Center; and Molly Tripp from A-H-S-T Community School District.

Also in attendance were Rebecca Bates, a consultant with Midwest Comprehensive Center; Rita Martens, administrative consultant for the Department of Education's Bureau of Standards and Curriculum; Erika Cook, bureau chief for Standards and Literacy; Sandy Nelson, with the Bureau of Learner Strategies and Supports; and Melissa Walker, writer for the review committee.

Agenda item: Welcome, review of purpose and outcomes

Notes:

Rita Martens, the administrative consultant for the Department of Education's Bureau of Standards and Curriculum, led a teamwork activity in which each committee member received a piece of paper with a picture on it. Committee members could not show their picture to the group and had to rely on discussion with other committee members to determine the order of the photos. Each picture was a picture inside of another picture until the final picture was a small dot. Martens said the activity was intended to be an analogy of what the group is trying to accomplish and the importance of committee members' attendance at meetings. People from various levels of education and different disciplines, along with professionals in the field were selected to serve on the committee in order to seek input from a wide sampling of voices. "What we're trying to do here is represent the big picture of literacy standards in Iowa," Martens said. "You were chosen to represent a very critical aspect of the population of these standards for the state of Iowa."

Martens also explained the committee's charge and the outcome of its work.

Team charge:

- To gather feedback from stakeholders on existing standards. Gov. Terry Brandstad issued Executive Order 83 in 2013 to clarify the existing standards and ensure they represented input from Iowa teachers. The order required a review, revision and possible rewriting process be conducted, so the literacy standards were a true representation of the opinion of Iowans.
- To study the current status of implementation of existing standards. Committee members will determine the status of implementation across the state and determine whether they are consistently being used in school districts.
- To review infrastructure and supports for existing standards. This includes a look at the resources available to help school districts including Area Education Agencies, websites and professional development tools.
- To identify areas for improvement for future work in the kindergarten through 12-grade Iowa Core Literacy Standards.

Projected outcomes

- Offer a report about the standards to the State Board of Education.
- Write recommendations about the standards: I.e. keep them as they are, revise them or eliminate some of them. All three options could apply.
- Write recommendations about implementation: What professional development, learning materials and resources are needed to support implementation, and do these services and materials need to be changed in any way to support the standards?

Agenda item: Norm setting

Notes: Kristine Milburn, a K-12 ELP coordinator and teacher leader for the West Des Moines Community School District and co-chairwoman of the standards review committee, led the group in a discussion of norm setting. The committee was broken into four groups and discussed norms, which were used to create this list:

1. Post norms publicly during meetings.
2. Discussions will have a timekeeper who will keep track of the finite start/stop times. This timekeeper will have some flexibility in start and stop times.

3. Remember that every decision should be made collaboratively. Know the difference between making a decision and having a conversation and giving feedback to one another.
4. When possible, reliable data will inform decisions. Use quantitative and qualitative data.
5. Remember that every decision should be made based on how it affects the children of Iowa.
6. The committee will establish and use a parking lot to address additional concerns and needs.
7. Working lunches are OK, but we need advance notice.
8. Identify items that need to be kept confidential at each meeting. The documents won't be released until they're completed, though the meetings and the discussion itself are public.
9. Use //electronic devices professionally.
10. Notes are shared with the group.

The norms were then discussed as a group to create this final list. Norms will be publicly posted during meetings.

1. Discussions will have a timekeeper who will keep track of finite start/stop times allowing for flexibility as needed; facilitator will determine flexibility as needed.
2. Remember that this work is based on meeting the needs of the children of Iowa.
3. Everyone participates in active listening, collaborative discussions and constructive feedback.
4. The committee establishes and uses an ongoing parking lot to address additional concerns and needs.
5. Working lunches are ok, but we need advance notice.
6. Identify items that need to be kept confidential at each meeting. The documents won't be released until they're completed, though the meetings and the discussion itself are public.
7. Use electronic devices professionally and ethically. Attend to the task at hand.

Milburn then discussed decision-making rules with the group. These rules will govern how the committee makes its decisions. The group considered the rules that were used by the committee that reviewed the Next Generation Science Standards and decided to adopt those except for a change to the rule about quorum.

Each decision arising from an agenda item or emerging from group work follows a simple structure:

- Discussion of the item: The item is discussed with the goal of identifying opinions and information on the topic at hand. The general direction of the group and potential proposals for action are often identified during the discussion.
- Formation of a proposal: Based on the discussion, a formal decision proposal on the issue is presented to the group. There can be several proposals at a time put before the group, since any and every member of the team may make a submission.
- Call for consensus: The facilitator of the decision-making body calls for consensus on the proposal. Members of the group must actively indicate whether they agree or strongly agree, are neutral (stand aside), disagree or strongly disagree, or are confused by using a Proposal Rating Sheet. Members sign each sheet by filling in with a dot and may add brief comments regarding the strengths and opportunities, and concerns and weaknesses of the proposal. The result is a graph-like visual representation of the group's collective opinions on each idea.

- Identification and addressing of concerns: If consensus is not achieved, each dissenter presents his or her concerns on the proposal, potentially starting another round of discussion to address or clarify the concern.
- Modification of the proposal: The proposal is amended or re-phrased in an attempt to address the concerns of the decision-makers. The process then returns to the call for consensus and the cycle is repeated until a satisfactory decision passes the consent threshold for the group.
- Additional vote: If the group deems a single proposal on an issue does not clearly stand out as having the team's overwhelming consensus, a vote between various proposals will be conducted, with each team member voting for one of the proposals.
- Yes or No vote: Proposals can also be put before the group requesting a YES or NO vote by the team members.
- Quorum: As the meetings progressed, the group identified twenty-four members as being active in attendance. The group agreed having thirteen members present at a meeting would constitute a quorum, and a majority vote would rule.

Agenda item: Developing a working glossary

Notes: Liz Hansen, a teacher at Grinnell-Newburg Community School District and co-chairwoman of the standards review committee, discussed a glossary of terms with the group, so committee members understood what terms meant when a specific word was discussed. She highlighted terms such as "evidence," "literacy" and "literacy standards of Iowa."

"Literacy's" definition has been expanded beyond only reading and writing. There was some discussion among group members that visual texts should be added to the definition.

"Literacy Standards of Iowa" is now how the group will refer to the standards as a whole.

Martens said the glossary may be included in the final report that goes to the State Board.

Agenda item: Professional learning – The Shifts

Notes: The committee watched a segment of a video that featured Sandra Alberti with Student Achievement Partners Inc. Alberti has visited Iowa several times to talk about literacy standards, how they've changed and why they're important. Her discussion in the video spoke about literacy standards from the national perspective. Martens wanted committee members to consider Alberti's words and whether they were relevant to Iowa.

From the video, Alberti focuses on three areas in terms of shifts:

1. Prior to the common core, the majority of what students were reading was literature. The shift with the standards has been to bring informational texts into the classroom in order to build knowledge. The division between literature and informational texts is about 50-50 in elementary school. By the time a student reaches high school, they are exposed to about 75 percent informational texts through multiple disciplines.
2. There has been a shift from students writing about personal experiences – based on their opinions not information that is grounded in evidence – to reading, writing and speaking about information that is pulled from texts, both literature and informational. Students are taught to read like a detective and write like a reporter.
3. Rather than being focused on the skills of reading and writing with an emphasis on the main idea and characters of a text, students are now being taught more about the

importance of the complexity of a text through its vocabulary, sentence structure and the concept of what's being read. It was discovered there was a four-year gap in the complexity of texts students were exposed to in high school and what was expected of them post-high school. Now, more students have regular practice with complex texts and their academic language.

Overall, students are reading more than stories. They're pulling evidence from what they're reading, and more students are reading texts at their appropriate level of complexity.

Martens asked the group to consider these questions in relation to the shifts in literacy for Iowa:

1. Are the issues that the shifts were designed to address prevalent in Iowa schools? What evidence do you have to support your answer?
2. Do you see those shifts being made? Again, what evidence do you have to support your opinion?

Each of the four groups discussed the questions and then reported to the entire committee:

- Committee members agreed the issues discussed in the video were prevalent in classrooms across the state of Iowa.
- There is an imbalance between informational texts and literature, and there's a lack of resources available for instructional strategies on how to help children become "thinkers."
- There is too much focus on the "shifts" and as a result, it creates an imbalance or it changes the way students are taught with too much emphasis being on moving toward the shift of adding more informational texts over literature. Instead, a holistic approach to literacy learning should be created by introducing informational texts and nonfiction in conjunction with literature and across multiple disciplines. Focus on the shifts also implies an understanding of what was and what used to be rather than placing an emphasis on the future.
- There needs to be a balance between overuse of personal narratives and allowing students to relate based on their own experiences.
- Some students are denied access to complex, informational texts because of their reading level or because they are in special education. The group discussed the importance of introducing these texts and making them accessible to all students regardless of reading level.
- Students are taught fictional reading strategies but not as many when it pertains to nonfiction.
- The literacy standards should cross reference other subject areas once the committee is finished with its work.
- Social studies is an area where students can receive more access to nonfiction texts.

Agenda item: Review revised survey; discuss in small groups

Notes: Erika Cook, chief of the Bureau of Standards and Curriculum, went through the survey questions with committee members. The survey is one way the committee will receive feedback from the public. Cook explained why questions were in the survey and the data the Department

of Education will receive as a result. Based on comments from the first literacy standards committee meeting, department officials realized the survey was too long and in depth, so it was trimmed and additional areas of exit were created. It was determined it was not realistic to ask teachers and others to spend up to an hour or more to take the survey.

The survey was created with these four components in mind:

1. Introduction: Questions about demographics of the survey-taker and general questions about the standards.
2. Review: Survey-takers can choose grade level standards to review and provide feedback. Within each grade, they will review the individual standards and can select to keep the standard as is, suggest revisions or eliminate it with comments for the latter two.
3. Understanding: Department officials want to be able to glean data about the survey-takers' understanding of the standards. Questions related to this were taken from Student Achievement Partners and some from the Department's surveys they've used for all standards.
4. Closing.

Each committee member then took the survey a couple of times and worked on feedback in order to determine how long it would take various individuals to complete the survey.

Committee members provided their feedback afterward. They thought the shorter length and more exit points were an improvement. It was determined it would take between 20 and 30 minutes to complete the survey, so department officials were asked to look for ways to further shorten it.

The group also questioned the depth in which someone is asked their thoughts about the standards. Department officials explained they wanted to determine a survey-taker's true understanding of the standards. It was discussed whether a separate survey should be done to address this and questions about professional development, but it was determined it would be unlikely the survey would be completed, especially if it came from the state.

Committee members also questioned whether survey-takers should be allowed to "eliminate" a standard and asked what department officials would do should the majority of feedback be for elimination of standards. Cook said the end result of the survey had to fit the directives in Executive Order 83 and could not be perceived as being biased in any way; therefore, survey-takers had to have the option to eliminate a standard. Martens reminded the committee that the survey is there for them to consider in making their decision, but that committee members would make the ultimate decision on whether a standard is eliminated.

Agenda item: Survey distribution

Notes: Cook said officials would work with the department's communications bureau to create a distribution plan for the survey to seek public feedback. The literacy standards review committee was asked to provide a list of possible organizations and groups of people who should receive the survey. The committee brainstormed ideas and provided feedback to Cook.